

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 IO-14 SAJ-01 NIC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 COME-00

EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 DRC-01 /136 W

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P 231807Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0624

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN PRIORITY

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS PRIORITY

CINCUSNAVEUR PRIORITY

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 06469

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UK, EI

SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION: SUNNINGDALE
AGREEMENTS MODIFIED

1. MARCH 22 ANNOUNCEMENT BY NI EXECUTIVE INDICATES
THAT COALITION HAS AGREED TO IMPORTANT MODIFICATIONS OF
SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENTS. IN ESSENCE, EXECUTIVE'S NEW
POSITION IS THAT SUNNINGDALE PACKAGE SHOULD BE INTRO-
DUCED IN TWO STAGES. AT FIRST IT WOULD CONSIST ONLY OF
A COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (APPOINTED BY GOVERNMENT OF
IRELAND AND NI EXECUTIVE) WHICH WOULD MEET IN A FORUM
FOR CONSULTATION, COOPERATION AND COORDINATION OF ACTION
BY

RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS IN RELATION TO PRESCRIBED SOCIAL
AND ECONOMIC MATTERS. IT WOULD HAVE A CONSULTATIVE
INTEREST IN SOME POLICY LEVEL APPOINTMENTS. THERE WOULD
BE NO TRANSFER OF POWERS TO THE COUNCIL DURING THE FIRST
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STAGE AND IT WOULD HAVE NO EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS. SECOND

STAGE, WHICH WOULD ONLY BE ENTERED UPON AFTER A TEST OF OPINION IN NEXT NI ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, WOULD SEE ADDITION (BY MUTUAL CONSENT) OF CERTAIN EXECUTIVE POWERS.

2. NI OFFICE UNDER SECRETARY TREVELYAN HAS TOLD US THAT NEITHER FAULKNER UNIONISTS NOR SDLP ARE SATISFIED WITH COMPROMISE WHICH WAS REACHED, BUT RECOGNIZE IT IS BEST THAT CAN BE HAD. HE CONFIRMED PRESS REPORTS THAT SDLP HAD RESISTED MAKING ANY SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS THROUGHOUT NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT INTENSE PRESSURE BY NI MINISTER OF STATE ORME HAD BEEN REQUIRED TO PREVENT SOME SDLP MEMBERS OF COALITION FROM RESIGNING. ORME SUCCEEDED ONLY BY POINTING OUT THAT SUCH RESIGNATIONS WOULD CAUSE THE COLLAPSE OF EXECUTIVE, THUS REQUIRING NEW ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS AND IN EFFECT GIVE ULSTER LOYALISTS WHAT THEY HAD BEEN DEMANDING. TREVELYAN SAID NO ONE IN NI--OR WHITEHALL--HAS ANY ILLUSION THAT AN ELECTION NOW OR IN NEAR FUTURE WOULD RESULT IN ANYTHING BUT A PROTESTANT ASSEMBLY MAJORITY UTTERLY OPPOSED TO CONCEPTS OF POWER-SHARING AND COOPERATION WITH REPUBLIC OF IRELAND WHICH ARE EMBODIED IN NI CONSTITUTION ACT.

3. TREVELYAN SAID IT WAS A GREAT PITY THAT SDLP CONCESSIONS HAD COME SO LATE THAT WHOLE POLITICAL STRUCTURE LABOROUSLY BUILT UP OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS WAS THREATENED. EVEN TWO WEEKS AGO, MODIFICATION OF SUNNINGDALE MIGHT HAVE AVERTED CONCERTED LOYALIST EFFORTS TO SABOTAGE THIS STRUCTURE. HE SAID THAT THE RESPONSE OF THE ULSTER WORKERS COUNCIL AND LOYALIST POLITICAL LEADERS TO YESTERDAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT HAD BEEN DISAPPOINTING BUT NOT SURPRISING. UWC REPRESENTED, AFTER ALL, EXTREME HARDLINE PROTESTANT GROUPINGS WHICH WERE BATTLING TO DEFEAT FAULKNER AND OTHERS WHO ACCEPTED POWER-SHARING. BRITISH STILL HOPE THAT ONCE IMPLICATIONS OF THE COALITION'S CONCESSIONS PENETRATE CONSCIOUSNESS OF NI PROTESTANTS, A WAY WILL BE FOUND TO CALL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 06469

OFF GENERAL STRIKE. BRITISH OFFICIALS, NI SECSTATE REES AND NI EXECUTIVE HAVE ALL REPEATEDLY SAID THEY WOULD NOT NEGOTIATE WITH MEN OF VIOLENCE, BUT TREVELYAN THOUGHT A WAY WOULD BE FOUND TO DEAL WITH UWC IF LATTER REALLY WANTED TO TALK.

4. BRITISH FEEL THEY HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL SO FAR IN AVOIDING A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION WITH LOYALIST STRIKERS AND PARAMILITARY UNITS. THEY WILL TRY TO CONTINUE TO DO SO BUT RECOGNIZE THAT SITUATION COULD SOUR VERY QUICKLY. TREVELYAN SAID THAT HMG (SUPPORTED BY OPPOSITION PARTIES) WOULD TAKE WHATEVER STEPS WERE WITHIN ITS CAPABILITIES TO KEEP MINIMUM ESSENTIAL SERVICES GOING AND TO PROTECT LIFE. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WERE VERY REAL LIMITATIONS ON WHAT ANY GOVERNMENT COULD HOPE TO ACHIEVE IN A GENERAL STRIKE SITUATION.

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5. TREVELYAN SAID HE WAS UNABLE TO PREDICT OR EVEN TO SPECULATE INTELLIGENTLY ABOUT HMG POLICY IN MEDIUM TERM IF NI SITUATION DETERIORATES TO POINT THAT THERE IS NO NI GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF FUNCTIONING. HOWEVER, HE SAID ONE WOULD HAVE TO THINK IN TERMS OF SOME FORM OF BRITISH DIRECT RULE. NOT ONLY WOULD THIS REFLECT YET ANOTHER FAILURE OF BRITISH (AND THIS TIME ALSO IRISH) GOVERNMENT POLICY IN NI, BUT PROSPECT COULD ONLY BE REGARDED WITH UTMOST GLOOM BY ANY RESPONSIBLE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

TREVELYAN CONFESSED THAT, PARTLY FOR THIS REASON,
BRITISH MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS WERE FAR FROM ADMITTING
TO DEFEAT AND WERE DETERMINED TO EXHAUST EVERY APPROACH
WHICH MIGHT SALVAGE EXISTING STRUCTURE.

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